

Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

Christ Points out to us the Gate of Life

THE THRILL OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

THE ANT AND THE GRASSHOPPER

THE MEN GOD WANTS

MEDITATIONS ON THE WORD

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

THE COMFORTER

Megiddo Message

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Kenneth E. Flowerday, Editor

A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

- Strengthen your faith in the Bible
- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
- Bring peace and stability to your life

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Weeds, Literal and Spiritual

Dear Sister:

I read, recently, an article concerning weeds. It stated the injurious effects are so far reaching that they cost the nation about five billion dollars a year, according to experts. Weeds not only crowd out plants, but they harbor crop-destroying insects and diseases. In tackling weeds of the literal variety or those which plague mankind in other ways, we should do more than *fight against* them. We can do this spiritually, by using the divine formula of *overcoming* evil with good. We find by reading Scripture that it is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3: 16, 17).

How we should work to make ourselves worthy of the better life to come, with all its glories. After all, the work that we do is for self, for we can add nothing to His greatness but He will accept and reward us for all that we do. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Eph. 5: 15, 16).

Maranatha!

St. Joseph, Mo.

Mrs. H. I. W.

Children, Known by Their Doings

Dear Maranatha Sister,

I thought that maybe you would be interested to hear of the two-hour program that the girls (aged 10, 11) had gotten up (when they, of necessity, were left at home, during their mothers' absence. Ed.).

They even had a curtain stretched across the living room. First, they had a scene going to Church, with prayer, Scripture Reading, a short sermon and songs. Then they met and reviewed the morning sermon. They also had an evening program which consisted of several selections. They had poems; they read; they had piano solos and a piano duet, flute and clarinet duets and solos, and singing, and reviewed verses from cards. We enjoyed their program very much and felt that their time had been well-spent together.

Selma, Iowa

Mrs. V. T.

For Clarity

Dear Sir:

We read the MEGIDDO MESSAGE and like it very much, as it explains the Bible and brings out the meaning of the Scriptures very plainly.

May the Eternal bless you for telling people of His true message.

Bloomsburg, Pa.

Mrs. E. S.

Christ Points out to us the Gate to Life

IN OUR SCRIPTURE lesson (Matt. 7) the Sermon on the Mount draws to its close. It has explained the nature of that character to which Jesus calls men, and of that blessedness to which He invites them. The law given from Sinai has been in part amplified, and in part superseded, by the new law given from the mountain in Galilee, under circumstances and amidst scenes, how different! At last it has reached that comprehensive summary of all relative duty: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

And there, we might say, that the sermon ends, so far as its instructions are concerned. It remains only to urge men to enter in through the gate thus opened, and to caution them against seducing influences (without and within) which might disappoint their hope of a final entrance into the everlasting kingdom of their Lord and Saviour.

These are our two remaining subjects. And first, there is a call to men to enter in through the gate which Christ points out. The path leading to the gate is narrow, the gate itself difficult to open, and passing through problematic. If we find anything discouraging in some of the thoughts here suggested, let us not forget those first three words: "Enter ye in." It is not to daunt, it is to incite us, to challenge us, that the merciful Saviour speaks thus to us.

A Proposition to Christians

What is the parable which He proposes to us?

In the far distance there are two gates. Beyond each there is, hidden from view, a dwelling place, a collection of dwelling places, a city of great or small proportions. We cannot see within. The wall hides, the gate intercepts the view. Yet we cannot fail to get the Master's meaning: one leads to destruction, the other to life.

One of these two gates is wide and ample. It seems to invite access, to promise admission. Many could enter in at one time. Judged by this token, the city within it might seem to be the larger and the more magnificent.

The other gate is strait and confined. It appears to be rather a postern, or back entrance gate. It looks, in the distance, as though it would scarcely admit one man at a time; as though the city must be poor, incommensurable and unattractive. And to each of these gates there leads a corresponding way.

Toward the wide gate there stretches a broad, smooth road. There is ample room upon it for all travelers; and many are in sight at one time, passing along commodiously and at their ease.

Toward the strait gate there extends a narrow pathway, difficult to find, as well as hard to keep. It winds over mountain sides, along abrupt precipices, here and there across precarious marshes, and if you ask for companions on the journey, they are few and rare in comparison with the passengers on the broad way toward the gate.

Nevertheless, inside that wide gate is *destruction*; perdition, hopelessness, the casting away of the man

himself, eternal oblivion. Therein is no brightness, but dim darkness; not happiness, not contentment, not honor, nor rest, nor peace; but rather misery and suffering; and shame too, as the Prophet of old writes, "shame and everlasting contempt." It is a one-way road to the land of no-return. The wise author of the book of Proverbs pictures this darksome passageway and its untimely ending as the path to the house of the strange woman, and says of her: "For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life" (Prov. 2: 18, 19). Indeed, it is a one-way road.

Inside the strait gate which seemed, at a distance, to promise nothing—at the end of that narrow way which seemed, in prospect, to lead to nowhere—there is that which Jesus calls *life*. This word is a two-aspect term. It covers the present and the future; it denotes first, Christian living and its consequence, life in the world to come. The active Christian really lives. He experiences that true, that real being—that expansion of every higher power and faculty—which for the first time makes a man feel and know that he lives; which makes existence—often having been a drag and a yoke—an ecstasy and a delight; which calls into vigorous exercise every capacity of happiness and contentment. It brings the hundredfold in this life, and much more; in the end we shall inherit "everlasting life."

The narrow way and strait gate lead to life—eternal life. It stretches forth in prospect into an unlimited duration. Inasmuch as it has this characteristic, that it is a life with God and in God, it is therefore as incapable of limit as of change, because they who dwell there, in the "high and holy place," dwell there with the "high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity."

Jesus said: "*Enter ye in at the strait gate.*" Luke in his gospel adds a verb, "strive." "*Strive* to enter in at the strait gate." Struggle, wrestle, "strain every nerve," contend earnestly to enter in. It is a work of difficulty; it demands toil and pain. The eager souls who would enter that gate must "storm" their way into the Kingdom.

For what is it? What is this entering in? What does it involve? It involves, *first a willingness to stand alone*. We are all, by nature, creatures of imitation. For one person who leads, thousands follow. And even the person who leads has followed someone. No man enters this world as a unit, as a being whose life is altogether detached and severed from all around and from all before him. It ought not to be so. A man must be an unloving, unamiable, unnatural man, to make it so. We ought to be influenced, and we must influence. In unimportant things, in all matters of mere outward custom, to be singular is to be foolish. It shows a care about trifles, which is unmanly; or else a desire to be noticed, which is ungodly.

And in all things connected with the life of this world—its trades and professions, its arts and sciences—a man must imitate if he would learn. Learning is imitation. To be original, for all except the one man in a million, is to be conceited, and to be wrong. But when we come to the things of the spiritual life, to questions of our duty

to God, and to questions of correct belief, then a man ought to be not only independent, but alone. "To his own master he standeth or falleth" (Rom. 14:4). It is not enough to be able to say—if indeed it could ever be said with truth—Everyone says this, everyone does this. That is not the question. The question is only, What is true? What is right? What does God command? To enter and travel the narrow way one must be prepared to say: "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4). The faith in which he should live and die, if it is to be the true faith, must be the "faith once for all delivered to the saints," and written down for us on the pages of God's holy Scriptures.

And our Lord here warns us that the common opinion and common practice of men, in the things of the soul, is not only an insufficient, but is even a fatal guide for such as would be saved. It is the way to destruction, which is crowded. It is of the wide gate of which He says, "many there be which go in thereat." People today take their religion at second hand. From their parents, from their teachers, from their friends—from the current ideas, the popular notions of their contemporaries and countrymen. Not from reflection, honest comparison, and not from the Bible. Not from God Himself—through His Word—do they derive that little system, poor and unstable and precarious as it is, which serves as their creed while they live, their hope when they die.

Let us ask ourselves the question, are we independent of the opinions of the world in things which pertain to our eternal salvation? Do we possess the independence to enter the narrow way and the strait gate? Do we in some measure bow to conformity in dress, in deportment, in speech? When the easy way leads the crowd astray, can the Captain count on you and me? To force our way through the narrow difficult gate we must dare to be different. We must dare to think independently. God's Word must be the final arbiter of what is right and wrong. It will be well for each of us to search our own hearts on these vital questions.

Now it is plain that this is one reason why it is difficult to enter in at the strait gate. To do this a man must be willing, if necessary, to stand alone. Each individual must be ready to speak as the oracles of God, he must know for himself whom he has believed, and why; and he must carry out his faith consistently in his own life.

The multitude throng the broad way. He who would enter into life must be willing, if need be, to walk alone.

Again, to enter the strait gate requires a *resolute purpose and a submissive will*. We shall never enter in unless we keep the gate in view. It is implied in the parable that the gate of life is less conspicuous than the other.

Many an eye is caught by the wide ample portal which forms the terminus of the broad commodious way. But the narrow gate is in danger of being overlooked in the distance, even as the path which leads to it lies, in part, out of sight. We must keep the gate in view, or we shall never reach it. We must see whither we are going, or we shall certainly not keep the way. Are we really bent upon being safe at last, upon entering into life, upon passing through the pearly gates? Nearer objects we all have, and they sometimes seem so alluring. We can work for an earthly prize. We can rise early, and take rest late, for the wages of this world; for a maintenance, or for a fortune, for something which is to gratify vanity or

reward ambition; but the narrow gate is in the far distance—who can see it? Who earnestly makes for it?

It was a great sin in the Israelites of old, that they "thought scorn of that pleasant land" which God promised them (Ps. 106:24). How is it with us? What resolute purpose is there in us to reach the prize at all hazards? Can we say with the great Apostle, "I count all things but loss . . . that I may . . . apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:8, 12).

Submission—Its Benefit

Then there is another thing: a submissive will. It is not enough to see the gate: we must also keep the way, and the way is sometimes hard to find, especially when we prefer not to find it. "Few there be that find it." The direction of the road is not always obvious. It does not always seem to be the straightest way toward the designated end. It turns and winds, here and there, so that the wayfarer doubts his course. Sometimes it is steep as well as narrow, rough, and full of obstacles; as well as intricate, and not to our liking. But in all this, the Christian must be submissive. A man who would reach the gate cannot choose his way; he must take what comes. Is it not so in obtaining that which we desire in this life? The journey through this world to the world to come is no different.

How hard to find sometimes, is the path of duty! Such ambiguous turns, such seemingly contradictory windings, such questions arising between safe courses and accomplishment, between rigidity and conciliation, between that which will please God, and that which we think might attract, and possibly win souls. Besides these, the more exceptional cases, such constant temptations to compromise with the flesh, such incessant buffetings of inclination, such daily crossing of the will and mortifying of the affections. It is not always easy to find—and certainly it is rarely pleasant to keep—this way that leads to life.

How discouraging sometimes is the morning prayer, in the prospect of a day's trials! How dispiriting too, at times is the evening prayer, in the retrospect of a day's faults and falls! Having stumbled so many times in the same pitfall, it takes much courage to go once more to the throne of grace and ask for help to keep the narrow way. What wonder is it, then, if some who have begun a Christian life faint in it, and are weary—if some even turn aside in the midst, and *walk no more with Jesus*? And what wonder, if many more, knowing by distant rumor the trials and troubles of the spiritual pilgrimage, put off, day by day and year by year, the work of beginning it; hoping against hope that something, some miracle perhaps, may make them Christians some day without their seeking; and that, though they neither see the gate nor keep the way, they may yet find themselves inhabitants of the city within it? Idle dreams, these; for such is physically impossible!

Once more, and yet more distinctly, this entering in is difficult, because the things within the two gates are beyond the view of sense. Destruction, and immortal life, we have experienced neither. They can be known only by the exercise of faith.

The world is too much with us. We are here imprisoned, each of us, within a body of flesh and blood; imprisoned all of us together within a world of matter, of sense, of

time. There is enough within these prison walls to occupy all our thoughts if we let them; sometimes with images of pain, and sometimes with images of pleasure. The cares of this life are enough; the pleasures of life are enough, the affections of life, lawful and unlawful, are enough for this; what is left, either of understanding or of interest, when all these are provided for? Thus it comes to pass that some are practically unbelievers in that which they see not. Faith, in the sight of the unseen, the spiritual apprehension of that which is to the senses invisible, may well be made, in Scripture, the one characteristic, the distinguishing attribute, of such as shall be saved.

"O, for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by many a foe;
That will not tremble on the brink
Of poverty or woe.

"Lord, may I have a faith like this,
And then whate'er may come,
I'll taste e'en here the hallowed bliss
Of an eternal home."

The Wide Gate—And Destruction, Certain, Final

Destruction, what is that? Can it mean a man losing himself, and being cast away forever? The religious world might say, "No, it cannot mean that. God is too good to destroy anyone! That cannot be the end of persons whose only fault has been that they lived by sight and not by faith; that they enjoyed the pleasure of common sin for a season, still less of those who did many things which were good, and heard the doctrine gladly!"

But let us take God at His Word. Let us have the faith to believe that the broad road and the wide gate lead to destruction, and destruction does not signify continued life. We made the statement earlier in this discourse that both the narrow and wide gates led to places of habitation, and we speculated that the wide gate, being so much more commodious, should lead to a place of ever burgeoning population. Indeed, our speculation was correct, for Jesus said: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."

The great masses of earth's inhabitants, having never recognized God or His authority, are gathered in this super-metropolis. The divine pronouncement is: "And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men; and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts" (Jer. 51:57). And ultimately all of God's unfaithful servants shall join them.

But what man in his right senses would want to spend eternal years in such a community? The dwellings are too small, too dark, the congestion unbearable. Just listen to the Psalmist's prediction of these places of habitation: "Nevertheless man being in honor abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish . . . Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling" (Ps. 49:12, 14). The grave, what a terrible dwelling place!

Today God is silent. He has been silent now for these many centuries. Men defy Him, and He does nothing about it. Rebellion brings no swift retribution. The

wages of sin have not been paid, and we may have the idea that they never shall be paid, but they shall, and with interest. The broad road *will* lead to destruction! It is inevitable.

The Narrow Gate—To Life

And *life*, "*strait is the gate*" that leadeth unto life. Another may ask, life, what is that? I cannot understand the pleasure—nay, I cannot catch the meaning—of a life altogether heavenly, a life lived wholly for God, surrendered completely to Him, uttering His praise or performing His service. Surely there must be an excuse for me if I cannot yet desire this; cannot set before myself as an object that which I understand not, cannot earnestly pursue that end which is to me unreal, visionary, transcendental!

Brethren beloved, if we have not experienced the blessedness of a fully consecrated life, we have no one to blame but ourselves. If sin still lies at our door, if we are double-minded, if our interests are divided, if we are trying to serve both God and mammon, we are still in the broad way, and cannot experience the joys of the Christ life.

And thus, to the difficulty which arises from our unwillingness to stand alone, and from our want of a resolute purpose and a submissive will, must be added this other and yet more fatal impediment—that we live in things which are seen, and cannot apprehend the very idea of life in the kingdom, the life of God.

The Essential Need of Faith

Unless we can picture ourselves as winners in the race for eternal life, how are we going to have the strength to run that race? How important is belief! Abraham believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness. Moses believed God, Samuel believed God. King David certainly believed God, for he said: "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps. 27:13). Isaiah believed, Jeremiah believed, Daniel believed, Simeon believed. Jesus Himself believed. And Paul believed. He expressed his honest belief when he quoted the Psalmist to the effect: "I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak" (II Cor. 4:13). And again: "for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

The future life—the real goal—is beautifully pictured many times throughout the Word of God. There are given to us "exceeding great and precious promises" of life in the age to come, on the other side of the difficult gate. After the toiling and the weeping, after the sowing and the reaping, can come the end, life in unspeakable bliss. For the overcomers the gate to life then will no longer be narrow, an "abundant entrance shall be ministered" to them "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." God will then set their feet in a "broad place," a place with "no straitness" in it (Job 36:16).

That life will be a life free from sorrow, free from pain, free from disappointment. There will be no more accidents, no more old age, no more bending forms, and there will be no more death. There is no reason for difficulty in estimating the value of the life beyond the narrow gate. That blissful life is vividly pictured in Reve-

lation 21: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful."

In Christ's Finished Kingdom All Life Immortal

Quite recently the theory has been advanced that in God's future kingdom, when His plan upon earth is consummated, Christ and His saints, an aristocracy of immortal kings and priests, will eternally reign over a group of mortal subjects. It is evident that the sponsor of this viewpoint has completely overlooked the aforementioned promise of Revelation 21: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death." No more death! All mortality is dead. No mortality without death, or death without mortality. Hence the promise of no more death sounds the death-knell to mortality. It simply cannot exist on earth when God's faithful promise of Revelation 21 is fulfilled.

Mortality is to be swallowed up of life. "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" But if through ages unending, mortal nations are still to exist on earth, the sting of death will remain, and the grave and death, and not life, will be victor.

The foregoing considerations will suffice to explain to us why the way of salvation is difficult. We ourselves make it difficult by trying to bring our own ways and attitudes into the narrow way. And now let us, in conclusion, lay to heart the solemn charge which bids us, nevertheless—notwithstanding the difficulty—at all risk, and at any cost, thus to enter in.

Enter ye in at the strait gate. Strait, difficult. If it be difficult, it certainly is not impossible. With men it may be impossible, but not with God. Hence with His help, and with the good counsel provided in His Word, we can enter the difficult gate, we can banish all sin from our lives.

We can overcome the tendency to anger, to malice, to jealousy, to pride. We can stanch the springs of guilty thought, we can learn to control the evil emotions of mind and body. We can cast down vain imaginations, and captivate every fleshly tendency that exalts itself above the knowledge of Christ. The difficult gate is *not beyond* our ability. The work *can* be done, it has been done, and let us reassure ourselves often that we can do it, and say, God helping me, I will enter the gate of life.

Remorse comes easily, but repentance involves a change in the manner of life which is not attained on the death bed, and rarely acquired through fear.

Actions, looks, words, steps, form the alphabet by which you may spell character.

The quickest way to fail in any undertaking is to think thoughts of failure.

A Broader Field

O thou who sighest for a broader field
Wherein to sow the seeds of truth and right—
Who fain a fuller, nobler power would wield
O'er human souls that languish for the light—

Search well the realm that even now is thine!
Canst not thou in some far-off corner find
A heart sin-bound, like tree with sapping vine,
Waiting for help its burden to unbind?

Some human plant, perchance beneath thine eyes,
Pierced through with hidden thorns of idle fears;
Or drooping low for need of light from skies
Obscured by doubt-clouds raining poison tears?

Some bruised soul the balm of love would heal;
Some timid spirit faith would courage give;
Or maimed brother, who, though brave and leal,
Still needeth thee, to rightly walk and live?

Oh, while one soul thou findest which hath not known
The fullest help thy soul hath power to give,
Sigh not for fields still broader than thine own,
But, steadfast in thine own, more broadly live.
—Selected

Be a Man

"Do not be discouraged! Don't lose heart. You may not be able to see the harvest where you have patiently sown the seed, but be assured of this: Some seed will fall upon good ground.

The truthful word manfully spoken, the earnest effort honestly made, the noble creed consistently held—these are things which do not perish; they live on and move the world and mould the destinies of men long after you are dust.

Leave cowardice to the cowards; leave servility to the slaves. Be a man—honorable and self-respecting, though in homespun; free, though in a hut.

Own your own soul."

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men. be strong."

Too Busy

"Too busy to read the Bible
Too busy to wait and pray
Too busy to speak out kindly
To someone by the way.
Too busy to care and struggle,
To think of the life to come;
Too busy finding mansions here
To plan for that heavenly home.
Too busy to help a brother
Who faces the winter blast;
Too busy to share this burden
When self in the balance is cast.
Too busy for all that is Holy,
On earth, beneath the sky,
Too busy to serve the Master,
But not too busy to die."

The Thrill of Accomplishment

"DID ANY MAN, at his death, ever regret his conflicts with himself, his victories over appetite, his scorn of impure pleasure, or his sufferings for righteousness' sake?" As the thunders roll back, "No!" let the Christian embarking on life's highest quest, take courage in his pursuit.

Every one, even in this life, would like to attain success, honor and influence, but nearly every one fails. Why? Because there are difficulties in the way. What is the customary way of treating them? It is to dodge them. Why should that be the customary way? Because it is the easy way, of course. To yield is easy; to resist is hard. Paul found this to be true when striving to bring his body under and when pressing toward the mark for the prize (I Cor. 9: 27; Phil. 3: 14).

We, like Paul, must grapple with every difficulty and besetting sin as it comes up and wrestle with it until we down it completely. Get on top of every difficulty that comes your way or it will get on top of you. There is no middle ground in this fight for eternal life. The great thing in this world is not so much where we stand as in what direction we are moving. To reach a port we must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it, but we must sail and not drift or lie at anchor.

We must have faith to attempt things and the courage to persevere in doing them. You remember Peter tells us to add courage to our faith. This faith must be born of the conviction that our Creator has given us the ability and the intelligence to accomplish and succeed if we will but use it in His service; but we must put these capabilities to work wherever and whenever an opportunity is afforded. We cannot sit back and wait for an opportunity to come around and push us into doing things. That is asking too much. You know things do not turn up in this world until somebody turns them up, and Today is Yesterday's plan put into action. Look about you right now, right where you are, and see how many things of common experience there are which might be subject to improvement, if you want to; but you must add work to that want; effort must precede accomplishment. Humility, which is the basis of many if not all the virtues, may be translated into everyday terms—as facing the facts. When you face the facts, you may find that you are walking on a plateau when you imagined that it was a mountain-top, but this will help you to get on solid ground to begin climbing.

When we realize our own insecurity, we are more open to suggestion and ideas than when we imagine ourselves safe and indispensable. A knowledge of our weaknesses helps us to best utilize our powers. The majority of people try to hide their weaknesses. If we have a habit of becoming irritable over trifles, we give some alibi for it. If we are impatient with those around us—look out! Be careful! This is a very common human failing—"The other fellow is to blame." These are weaknesses and must be recognized; but so often we try to cover them up and, like the tuberculosis germ, which is kept alive and

becomes stronger in sunless places, our weaknesses when not brought to the light and recognized, become more virulent. It takes time and energy to keep things hidden and we are always having to think up alibis and excuses. Do not have an alibi for anything for which we are to blame. All our actions either for good or evil, are first conceived in the mind and this holds true in everything that we do.

What we are is but a picture of what we think (Prov. 23: 7). If we do not like the picture presented, it is up to us to change it; for the remedy lies in our own hands. God has furnished the Balm of Gilead, the healing medicine (Jer. 8: 22; Ps. 107: 20). Our reluctance to use that remedy, to correct and control our thinking and have it in harmony with the Word, often brings embarrassing results and consequences. Blaming our troubles on others instead of seeking the solution within ourselves, only tends to multiply the problem. Often when we are in trouble and want to find the fellow who is to blame, we should look into the mirror. When we try to dodge our difficulties instead of frankly facing them and honestly looking for a solution, we are merely heaping up wrath against the day of wrath and deluding ourselves by evading an obvious responsibility. A very common alibi is, "I cannot see where I am at fault," but a clear view in such a case is not so much a physical matter as a willingness to move our mind to the place from which we can see.

In Ps. 103: 3, 5, we read of the healing qualities of this "light of life." In it there is healing for the mind and for the body. There is a light upon the way. There is a central core of peace which nothing outward can shatter. There is something to lean the back against and trust it to hold, and above all, there are simple techniques which lead to all these blessings and benefits. No one can cherish an ideal, devote himself to its realization from year to year and strive and struggle and make sacrifices for its attainment without undergoing a certain gracious transformation of which the highest powers must be aware and which men can hardly miss.

Self-improvement comes only through patient and persistent practice, the repeated doing of things that build strength of character and the conscious control of one's thoughts and actions. This, of course, presupposes a desire for advancement and also that we do not lose sight of the reward, without which our efforts become listless and indifferent and inevitably end in discouragement and defeat.

Self-analysis is one of the first and most important steps in this journey toward our goal. We fool no one but ourselves when we try to hide our faults and shortcomings. That person travels faster and goes farther who is most relentless in his corrective criticism of himself. To the degree that we are willing to apply the probe of self-analysis and practice the exercise of self-improvement in things divine, shall we enjoy the rewards which come to those who are willing to make the effort to reach the end in view. Then one day we shall realize that somewhere along the road of daily experience we have dropped the old undesirable traits and habits which like excess baggage have retarded our spiritual progress. With that realization comes the thrill of having accomplished something worth while.

Personality represents one's dominant desires.

The Ant and the Grasshopper

PERHAPS most of us remember having read sometime during early childhood, the fable of the ant and the grasshopper that lived in the same field. The ant was seen working industriously day after day throughout the summer, laying up a store of food for the cold days to come, while on the other hand, the grasshopper danced and idled away his days. He had only ridicule and scorn to offer in return for the sound advice given by the ant in telling him of the trouble that would come upon him if he did not mend his ways. Then when winter came he had no food, and was compelled to beg of the ant for bodily sustenance, and failing in this, perished.

Simple as this narrative is, there should be a deep lesson in it for all of us, particularly in a spiritual sense. To more clearly illustrate this, let us mention here some of the outstanding traits of these two members of the insect kingdom.

In Comstock's *Hand-Book of Nature Study* we read, "The ant can run with a rapidity that, comparatively, would soon outdistance any Marathon runner, however famed. I timed an ant one day. She was in no hurry, and yet she made time that if translated into human terms would mean sixteen yards per second." Carrying these calculations a bit further, we find that this would be at the rate of about thirty-three miles per hour.

This same writer goes on to tell of the extreme and precise order in which the burrows or homes are kept, how they help one another in giving food and other assistance, the tender care of the young, and their utter disdain for those not of their family or colony. And after describing the excessive cleanliness of these insects, and the method by which this is achieved, this writer says, using his own words, "she starts promptly to do something, for she is a little six-footed Martha, always weighed down or buoyed up by many duties and cares." Because of such thrifty characteristics, we have come to regard these aggressive little creatures as the epitome of industriousness.

But with the grasshopper, we find traits that are the very opposite. He is too busy having a good time to even build a home, let alone storing up food in one, but instead he lives from day to day. They depend upon a perpetuation of the species by laying eggs in the earth or rotted wood, to be hatched out the following spring, the young being left to shift for themselves. Wanton, destructive creatures they are, willingly ignorant of the need of preparing for the future, partaking of the best as they go along. Here today and gone tomorrow.

Now the question in our minds should be, "Are we ants or grasshoppers?" We can be whichever we choose. If we are daily adding to our store of spiritual food or knowledge, so as to be prepared to help those who beg of us when that Great Day comes; if we are always ready and eager to help our brother, and delight in his association in preference to individuals who do not care for this living way; if we are striving daily to attain to purity and cleanliness of mind and body, trusting not in our own ways and notions but in God's ways, then there is hope for us. But if, on the other hand, we are idling away our time, feeding upon our own food, the flesh, instead of this heavenly manna, which alone will sustain us; if we condone the frivolity and foolishness going on round about

us, and give the nod to the shiftless and beggarly elements of the world who are disdainfully ignorant of things good and true, then we can be sure we will be classed among those inhabitants of earth spoken of in Isaiah 40:22—just grasshoppers.

No wonder the Wise Man addressed this class thus, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest" (Prov. 6:6-8). Webster gives the definition for sluggard as one who is habitually lazy or inactive, sluggish. If we are not improving every minute of our time, laying up knowledge for that Day to come, and, most of all, not doing the things commanded of us, we are sluggards. We know that God has always kept His promises, as proved by fulfilled Scripture and historical recordings. So we know that "the day cometh that shall burn as an oven," that day when His judgments are in the earth, and unless we have made every moment count now in preparation for that time, we shall only be as grasshoppers.

We can rightfully ask of these sluggards, "What will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?" (Isa. 10:3). The answer is given us in Zechariah 8:23, "In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew [spiritual Jew, Rom. 2:29], saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." Yes, when this time comes, which must be very soon, one-third of earth's millions (Zech. 13:8) will beg for food, for the knowledge of God which they have failed to lay up in store for this time of need. There is to be a famine in the land for hearing the Word of God (Amos 8:11). Will we be able to furnish this food? The ant knows that the time is coming when she can no longer gather food. Are we as wise?

Our founder said, "If we are not zealously affected always, we are slothful. If we are not up and doing, if not affected by this wonderful Truth so we will go to work and accomplish our task, it is an omen we are slothful." If we "gnaw not the bones till the morrow," do not lay up for this Morning, "the dawn of prosperity and happiness," we are nothing but grasshoppers, wasting our time.

Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." If we will only get down and do this work before nightfall, before this day of salvation is ended, and not be hearers only, then when the Sun of Righteousness appears on that joyous Morning after, we shall be glad, oh so glad, we did this work. But, like the ant, we must be busy day after day, hour after hour, all the time. We must accomplish something with every effort. A grasshopper can appear very industrious at times, but he never gets anything done.

What a grand time it will be when we can say with the victors of the ages "I have finished" and we are waiting for the dawn of that bright, eternal Morning. But we must hurry, for the night is already far spent. Then we can be instructors rather than those instructed; we can be givers rather than receivers, for "it is more blessed to

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The Men God Wants

AS CHRISTIANS, we have many things to observe: chiefly the Word of God, His dealings with mankind, His plan for this earth, and what we must do to share the blessings when He performs His Word. The fulfillment of prophecy is always an outstanding subject. Of immediate interest and vital importance is the state of affairs in current events. The world is now in such a condition that no sensible person would rationalize it as just another degree or stage in the onward march of progress, for the best minds strain and grope in futile labor for a solution.

Before World War I it was said by some observers, noting the great technical advance of munitions, that a war would be the end of civilization, so powerful were the guns, ships and explosives they had developed. Then the same sensibility to danger was heard in a much stronger voice before World War II. The world had now become a dangerous place in which to live. The days of soldiers killing soldiers were gone, for the screaming bombs were dropped on civilian cities to the saturation point, as it was called, killing women and children alike. Then came that hideous development of science, the atom bomb. The human heart is proved to be fiendish indeed when it rushes to such use for the first application of a great law. Now, by an act as simple as pressing a doorbell button, an airman could send death to 100,000 persons. This terrible device shocked the complacent into a cold realization. But this, even this monstrous destroyer, was not enough. The technicians, like boys with matches, must try for more. They must try the hydrogen bomb. And so, in the name of science and progress and learning, they did it. In the name of self-preservation and national defense they did it. They invented the "H" bomb. Now the push-button can obliterate a great metropolitan area, carrying hapless millions to nothingness. More, its deadly residue remains in enormous clouds to drift from the gutted scene and poison more thousands of square miles. This product of civilization, together with astonishing aircraft that can carry it halfway around the world in a few hours, forms or rather deforms the atmosphere we live in. We would like to think this was the limit of terribleness, but no—! The great powers are at work on the ultimate weapon, a diabolical missile that can hurl itself 10,000 m.p.h. to deliver the bomb with certainty to a target halfway around the earth, so suddenly that its coming could not be detected more than ten to twenty minutes in advance.

It is a dark picture; but happy are we to know of the truth of God's Word. We need not fear the world's fear, for God is stronger than man; and truth is stronger than error. There are many threats and dangers, but God's Word shall stand. Let not these things disturb; rather, look at them as one who rests securely in the love of his God. Look at them as amazing fulfillments of His Word. Remember how He has told us that in the last days perilous times should come, and how that men's hearts would be failing them for fear and for looking after those things that are coming to pass. Remember that evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.

Remember, too, that He foretold that just before His return the men of war would be awakened. We do not expect the world to be blown up, for they will be in a con-

dition to make war with the Lord at His return, as He foresaw. And that is what we must think about and prepare for. That great day of the Lord and the time of trouble such as never was since the world began, shall be more serious than any trouble now. The world will fight desperately and utilize every possible means, making arms of their very tools and utensils to resist the good Lord. They will fight until two-thirds have been destroyed, and this is far, far in excess of any other war. Rev. 19:19, is a prophecy yet to be fulfilled. "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army." Two mighty forces are destined to meet in mortal combat—the beast (Rome) heading earth's rulers and their armies against the King of kings, who comes to cleanse the earth and prepare it for His Kingdom.

That is the day against which we must prepare our minds and hearts. That is the day when God shall separate and select the good for a better world. He wants godliness first from His rulers, and in the Millenium He wants it of the subjects.

This is what He wants: Those who have put away sin, those who have ceased from anger; those who have grown too big for jealousy, too humble for pride, those whose soul is too pure for immorality; those who are fair, honest, sincere and trustworthy; those whose aspiration to greatness is untainted by selfishness or egotism.

God wants Christians. These are the pleasant things, beautiful things that should fill our minds. This high calling to produce a fine, godly character can fill our lives with sweetness in place of fear. The troubles of earth cannot harm God's elect, for He has promised that even though a thousand should "fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, yet it shall not come nigh thee."

God is looking for good people to live a good life. Can we not rejoice to look beyond these shadows to a better day?

"Great is Thy faithfulness," O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not,
As Thou has been Thou forever wilt be.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

"Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!"
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
"Great is Thy faithfulness," Lord, unto me!

The Ant and the Grasshopper

(Continued from page 8)

give than to receive"; we shall be rulers rather than subjects, rulers with the great King.

So in closing, let us keep in mind these lines of Proverbs 10:5, "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son, but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame."

Meditations

On the Word

"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes" (Psalms 118: 8, 9).

The former of these two verses is said to be the center verse of the Bible, the pivot on which all else hangs, and well deserves its central position. What thought could be more elevating and what advice more timely than that which is couched in the words, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man"? It lifts us above ourselves, it lifts us above other men in our same rank or sphere of life, it lifts us above princes, the mighty, the cultured, the possessors of great wealth or influence, and bids us look to the "Rock" that is "higher" than we are.

A casual comparison between the qualities of God and man should serve to convince us that it is better to trust in the Lord. Man is finite, God is infinite. God has lived from all eternity past and will continue to live through all time yet to come; man is mortal, here today, gone tomorrow, his days on earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. God is omnipresent, "the . . . heaven of heavens cannot contain" Him; man is puny, his sphere of action is circumscribed by the physical laws that bind him to the earth. Man can make promises but can give no assurance of the ability or the continued life to fulfill them; while the Almighty cannot fail, His great and precious promise that every worthy child of His shall partake of the divine nature is as immutable and unbreakable as the law that controls the universe. God never changes, He is the same "yesterday, today, and forever"; while the mind of man is fickle and unstable, and as an open torch is "blown and flared by every wind of passion's sway." God never forgets. When once we have made Him our Friend through virtue of a righteous and sinless life His interest in us never wanes, even death itself cannot blot our name from His "book of remembrance"; while human interest is ephemeral, and one whom we have especially favored may hold us in highest esteem today, yet forget us completely with the passage of years, and be totally indifferent to our welfare in time of need or distress. Truly, "it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man."

The Almighty does not ask us to accept one general statement of a fact, such as that in our memory verse, as complete proof, but the Word abounds with declarations, forceful and direct, telling specifically what He can and will do for us if we trust Him. The following citations will serve as examples: "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. . . They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40: 28, 29, 31);

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3: 20). Also numerous others which space here will not permit, such as: II Cor. 6: 17, 18; Rev. 21: 3, 4; Isa. 58: 13, 14.

Now that we have a clear mental picture of what God will do for those who trust in Him, let us check up on ourselves to see what changes are necessary in our individual lives to qualify as one who trusts in Him. In Prov. 3: 5 we are commanded, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." The inclination to lean upon our own understanding and think ourselves capable of directing our own destinies is very common to human nature, and let us not delude ourselves into believing we are an exception to the rule. Our thoughts are naturally vain and need directing. The Word of God can do this. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10: 5). If trusting in God we will never take the attitude of the haughty people who say, "With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" (Ps. 12: 4) but instead our prayer will be, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Ps. 141: 3).

Freedom of action is a right which democratic peoples feel should not be denied them, yet to enjoy the benefits of living in a well-regulated society we willingly submit to a certain amount of restriction; so if we wish to share the abundant blessings the Lord can give we must be prepared to submit to every command given in His Word. Proverbs 3: 6 is forceful and direct, "In *all thy ways* acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." It is one thing to acknowledge Him in some of our ways, but quite another to acknowledge Him in *all* of our ways! We all agree that a Christian should not murder nor steal nor swear, but are we as ready to agree with the divine command not to let "filthiness, . . . foolish talking, nor jesting" be once named among us (Eph. 5: 3, 4)? And how about our tempers? Do we agree that wrath is a fruit of the flesh and must be dispensed with (Gal. 5: 20); that it rests in the bosom of fools (Eccl. 7: 9) and has no place in the life of a Christian? Are we willing to comply with the demand to come out from the world and be a separate and peculiar people "zealous of good works" (II Cor. 6: 17; Titus 2: 14), to "redeem the time" (Eph. 5: 16), and not waste it playing cards or indulging in other time-killing games? If not in accord with these commands we cannot truthfully say we trust in the Lord.

One point we should not miss in the study of our memory verse is the thought of trusting in princes. Experience may have taught us not to put too much confidence in the promises of the world's leaders; there are people, however, who are inclined to look up to some man or woman whom they confide in as their spiritual guide, but unless that person sticks right by the Word he is unsafe to follow. In our courts, ignorance of the law is not accepted as an excuse for breaking it; neither will the fact that we have been misled be taken as an excuse when we stand before the Great Judge. "The leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed," said the Prophet (Isa. 9: 16). It is our duty to compare with the Bible everything we are asked to believe, and accept only that which can be plainly proved.

Questions and Answers



I see in your questions answered where the question was asked "Do you believe in a succession of the Apostles, or do you think there were only twelve?"

You say that Paul was called by the Lord Himself to succeed Judas. I don't see it that way, for what does the Acts, chap. 1 v. 26 say? that the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

The question of Matthias' being an apostle was touched on in our April 4, 1959, and again in our May 16 issue, 1959. The pertinent facts pointed out in these answers seem all inclusive. We can re-state them.

Jesus' command to His disciples just before His ascension, as recorded in Luke 24: 49 and Acts 1: 4 was, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." And: "being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father," the Holy Spirit, which they should receive "not many days hence." In the face of this definite command to "wait," or "tarry," Peter overstepped his authority and went ahead with official business which he should not have undertaken until the authority of the Holy Spirit was present. The fact that the lot fell on Matthias was no proof of authority. If two men were being voted on either one or the other would have to win, even in a tie.

Jesus appeared to Saul (later known as Paul) on the Damascus road sometime later, officially placing him in the ministry, and obviously appointing him to the apostleship in place of Judas. The record states: "And as he (Saul) journeyed he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. . . And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

Three days later Ananias was sent by the Spirit to open Saul's eyes, and to reveal to him what his mission was to be, with these words: "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9: 3-6, 15).

And in Acts 22: 14, 15 we have Paul's own account of his conversion and call to the apostleship, and his testimony that one of his prime qualifications was that he had seen the risen Lord. He quotes Ananias again: "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see the Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth." He re-stated his case in First Cor. 9: 1, "Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?" And I Cor. 15: 7-9 lists the same facts.

None of the foregoing passages actually say that Paul was appointed by Jesus to take the place of Judas, however circumstantial evidence strongly favors that position. After the reference to casting lots for Matthias in Acts 1: 23-26, we hear no more of Matthias. The apostle chosen by Jesus to take the place of Judas, that greatest of the apostles, Paul, is very much in evidence from the time of his appointment until shortly before his death. He begins nine of his Epistles with the salutation, "Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ."

To the foregoing we must add another proof that *twelve* was to be the ultimate number of the apostles of Jesus: "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

If there is no immortality of the soul, please explain Philipians 1, beginning at v. 21 down to vs. 25.

The aforementioned verses read as follows: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor; yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith."

It does not seem possible that Paul meant to teach here that he expected to get his reward or be with Christ immediately after death. The burden of his teaching was the very opposite of this. In I Corinthians 15 he stressed the need for a resurrection of the body if one is to receive his reward. He made it plain that Christ had been raised, and that each aspirant for the prize of immortal life also must be raised if he is ever to receive that reward. Furthermore he makes it plain when each worthy one will receive his reward, not at death, but at Christ's coming. "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (v. 23).

In II Tim. 4: 7, 8 Paul expresses his personal hope in a clear-cut statement: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Paul expected to be rewarded at the day of Christ's coming. To hope to depart and be with Christ at death would contradict this expectation. It does not seem that Paul could have held to two such contradictory hopes.

The Greek word *analuo*, rendered *depart* in Phil. 1: 23, is in Luke 12: 36 translated "*return*." The words of Jesus read as follows: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return [*analuo*] from the wedding." Jesus was obviously speaking of the time when He will return to reward the faithful. With this plain definition of "*analuo*," we understand that Paul was simply longing for the *return* of the Lord Jesus.

Paul had experienced much persecution first hand, the Holy Spirit had witnessed to him that in every city to which he should go, bonds and imprisonments should await him. He had faithfully performed all that God had commanded him to do. To fall asleep in death would be preferable, as it would relieve him of the turmoil, fatigue, and persecution to which he was always subject. There is no consciousness of time in death, hence the next moment to him would be the glad resurrection, and being with Christ.

Wilson's *Emphatic Diaglott* carries this very idea in translating Phil. 1: 23, 24, "I am indeed hard pressed by two things;—(I have an earnest desire for the *returning*, and being with Christ, since it is very much to be preferred;)—but to remain in the flesh is more requisite on your account."

The Comforter

Should Misfortune weave her tangled skien . . . Across the path you tread . . . If the day that dawned in splendor . . . Has assumed a darker hue . . . With the sunshine giving place to rain . . . Hope giving place to dread . . . Till you think your last defender . . . Has discovered friendships new . . . Don't lose heart! You're being tested . . . In God's melting pot divine . . . That a vessel for the finer . . . May come forth, to brightly glow . . . For He wishes but to try your gold . . . Your silver to refine . . . To prepare you for the glories . . . That you afterward shall know.

. . . When the eye that once saw clearly . . . Has become bedimmed with age . . . And the feet, once sure and steady . . . Falter with each step you take . . . When the ones you loved so dearly . . . Have been written on Death's page . . . Have no fear, if you are ready . . . That Jehovah will forsake . . . Draw the Bible closer to you . . . And its promises believe . . . Thankful for the blest assurance . . . On its pages found revealed . . . That no evil can pursue you . . . Naught will be allowed to grieve . . . For to those of staunch endurance . . . Is the Father's promise sealed.

Jesus promised His disciples . . . He a Comforter would send . . . To the hearts weighed down with sorrow . . . Lest their hope turn to despair . . . While awaiting His returning . . . When His own He would defend . . . On the glorious Tomorrow . . . In the Kingdom, bright and fair . . . Now, as then, the Truth will comfort . . . When we pass through life's dark hour . . . Telling of the time when Jesus comes . . . The righteous to reward . . . Sounding forth the joyful message . . . That He's coming soon, with pow'r . . . To redeem His faithful servants . . . Then with joy they'll greet their Lord.

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